

3.20 WOODLANDS AND TIMBER RESOURCES

3.20.1 Regional Overview

Woodland resources comprise lands producing forest tree species that may be used as non-sawtimber products and sold in units other than board feet. By contrast, timber resources are used for sawtimber products and may be sold in board feet. For management purposes in the VPA, timber resources have been grouped with woodland resources.

Woodland resources within the VPA begin at mid-elevations, where sagebrush communities of the lower, more arid areas become dominated by pinyon pine and juniper (5,000 to 8,000 ft). Generally, woodland resources within the VPA consist of pinyon pine, juniper, and gambel oak. Forest species, the source of most timber resources, are found at higher elevations (Colorado Plateau 2002). Timber resources include ponderosa pine, aspen, Douglas fir, and minor quantities of spruce, white fir, limber pine, and subalpine fir. The stands with commercial value are located south of the town of Myton, in the Five Mile, Trail Canyon, and Big Wash areas; the south Diamond Mountain Rim; the northern slopes of Diamond Mountain; in Browns Park, near Diamond Mountain; in the drainages that flow into Argyle Canyon; and the southern portions of the Book Cliffs (BLM 1990, 2002).

In the southern part of the VPA, in the vicinity of the Book Cliffs Mountains, the principal woodland species consist of pinyon pine, Utah juniper, and Rocky Mountain juniper. High-production areas containing these species generally have slopes of less than 25% and have not been recently burned. In the higher elevations, Douglas fir and aspen generally grow on northern and eastern slopes (at 6,000–8,500 feet) and at the heads of canyons, where soil moisture is near the surface. Cottonwoods grow along the White and Green River bottoms and generally do not grow more than 100 yards from the rivers' edges. Stands also include Russian olive and tamarisk. Mature, single-storied stands of cottonwood grow along old river channels, oxbows, and sandbars. Some areas near Diamond Mountain in the northern portion of the VPA support forest species such as Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, and aspen. Douglas fir is the dominant species in these higher elevation areas, composing up to 70% of the canopy coverage (Diamond Mountain MSA 1990). Approximately 2,000 acres of ponderosa pine exist here as well, some as relict stands.

3.20.2 Woodland and Timber Products

The most desirable woodland and timber products, sought after by both commercial and private interests, include sawtimber, fuelwood, posts, and Christmas trees. Interest in biomass is increasing and is expected to continue to grow as new uses and technologies develop. There is also a limited demand for other woodland products such as shrubs, trees, and seeds. The demand for woodland products continues to increase; however, the ability to satisfy the demand for woodland products is limited by the available woodland resource.

Commercial sales or commercial harvesting of timber resources are permitted by the BLM., Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, limber pine, aspen, and cottonwood trees may be sold in designated areas to protect forest stands from disease or to prevent wildland fires (BLM 1996).

Historically, pinyon pine has been the preferred species for fuelwood, but juniper has become popular as well. In the past, both of these woodland species were harvested following chainings,

but most of the wood within these areas has been removed. Cutting of green wood is now a more common practice for commercial woodcutters.

Trees used as posts are generally found on the more productive, pinyon-juniper sites, where the soils are deep and well drained. Trees suitable for posts have become more difficult to find because they have been searched out and cut by local residents for many years. The areas where significant numbers of post-trees still grow are remote and not easily reached.

The annual demand for cut Christmas trees remains high, but the quantity of good-quality pinyon pine, the Christmas tree of choice, is limited (BLM 2002). Demand for Christmas trees from the VPA is primarily local, but each year, enough trees are sold to only partially satisfy local demand. Past sales of Christmas trees for personal use have been limited to approximately 600-800 trees. Live pinyon pine are also sold for landscaping.

Current management of woodland resources focuses on prescribed burns, burning of slash piles, and commercial and personal greenwood sales of pinyon pine and juniper. The BLM monitors commercial woodcutting periodically to ensure that woodcutters remain in compliance with their permit stipulations.

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